

**HOUSTON ARTC CENTER
OFFSHORE IFR HELICOPTER OPERATIONS**

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

EFFECTIVE: MARCH 1, 2018

SUBJECT: OFFSHORE AND COASTAL IFR HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

1. **PURPOSE.** There is a requirement to provide ATC service to helicopters operating under IFR to and from landing platforms located in the Gulf of Mexico. This agreement establishes responsibilities and describes procedures for control of IFR helicopters (referred to as operators, and/or companies, and/or commercial, and/or flight crews, as appropriate) in portions of domestic, offshore, and oceanic airspace within the Houston CTA and FIR.

2. **CANCELLATION.** This agreement cancels and supersedes the Houston ARTCC Offshore IFR Helicopter Operations Letter of Agreement, dated August 22, 2013, and all revisions thereto.

3. **SCOPE.** The procedures and airspace specified herein are applicable to all governmental and commercial signatories. Each party to this Letter of Agreement must ensure all affected personnel are familiar with these procedures.

4. **ABBREVIATIONS.**

ADS-B	Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast
ARTCC	Air Route Traffic Control Center
ATCT	Air Traffic Control Tower
ATC	Air Traffic Control
CTA	Control Area
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FIR	Flight Information Region
FSDO	Flight Standards District Office
GPS	Global Positioning System
HEDA	Helicopter En Route Descent Area
IFR	Instrument Flight Rules
NAS	National Airspace System
NM	Nautical Mile
OSAP	Offshore Approach Procedure
SIAP	Special Instrument Approach Procedure
VFR	Visual Flight Rules
ZHU	Houston ARTC Center
ZJX	Jacksonville ARTC Center

5. **PROCEDURES.**

a. General.

(1) FSDO is the authority responsible for certifying operators to fly IFR using the GPS Waypoint System in the Gulf of Mexico depicted in ANNEX 1. Before an operator may utilize the system, the ability of aircraft and flight crews to maintain navigational accuracy must be demonstrated to FSDO.

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(2) Aircraft that are not ADS-B equipped must file the letter "X" at the end of their call sign. Flight crews must report "non-ADS-B equipped" on initial communication with ATC.

(3) Route segments are established between any two GPS waypoints depicted in ANNEX 1. Non-ADS-B route segments must be on a latitudinal, a longitudinal, or forty-five (45) degree course between the waypoints. A route segment between two waypoints must not exceed 260 NM in length. Route ingress and egress must be to/from the nearest waypoint on course or consistent with the segment of approach.

(4) Holding may be accomplished at each of the waypoints depicted in ANNEX 1. A standard holding pattern, as depicted in ANNEX 5, must be executed to remain within ATC protected airspace.

(5) In the event of lost communications and non-receipt of additional ATC instructions following a missed approach, flight crews must proceed to an alternate helipad as listed in the remarks section of the flight plan at a VFR altitude. Aircraft must squawk the appropriate code and advise ATC of intentions as soon as possible.

NOTE: *In the event flight crews proceed to an alternate helipad as described in the above paragraph, this event will be considered an emergency procedure, and ATC will NOT protect the route or altitude to the alternate helipad.*

(6) Communication with operators beyond the coverage of existing FAA communications must be provided by company radios and relayed to the appropriate ATC facility. Company communications personnel must relay all clearances and ATC instructions verbatim. Company communications personnel must also relay all cancellations, arrival and departure times, and reports of non-delivery of clearances.

(7) The waypoint naming convention is such that each character does not have to be pronounced phonetically. The first three letters will be pronounced by geographical reference and the 4th and 5th character phonetically (Example: LLARC - "White Lake Romeo Charlie").

(8) Companies and/or operators must contact Leidos Flight Service, or ATC as soon as possible, to remove all proposed IFR flight plans from the NAS when the flight plans are determined to be of no further use.

(9) Due to technical issues, ZJX does not utilize the Gulf of Mexico GRID System. For flights that proceed more than twenty (20) NM into ZJX's airspace, operators need to file a route of flight not utilizing the Gulf of Mexico GRID System waypoints inside ZJX's airspace. For flights south of Warning Area 155 (W-155), the route must utilize the waypoints REDFN and NAITE in ZHU's airspace direct to/from the destination/departure coordinates in ZJX's airspace.

NOTE: *Due to a lack of frequency coverage in ZJX, all enroute coordination will be through the ZJX's Supervisor telephone number 904-549-1549.*

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b. Inland Departures.

(1) Non-ADS-B aircraft must file a departure routing over an outbound waypoint as depicted in ANNEX 2, 3 or 4, if applicable, and then a full route of flight as outlined in paragraph 5a(3). ADS-B equipped aircraft must file the appropriate departure routing over an outbound waypoint as depicted in ANNEX 2, 3, or 4, if applicable, or to the nearest grid system waypoint and then file direct to the waypoint that serves the offshore destination.

NOTE: *Aircraft that will proceed more than twenty (20) NM into ZJX will be required to file a route of flight as outlined in paragraph 5a(9).*

(2) Companies and/or operators must file a flight plan at least thirty (30) minutes prior to departure including the coordinates for the destination and alternate destination. If the alternate destination is an inland airport/heliport, then the appropriate identifier may be used.

(3) Clearance to offshore destinations must normally be obtained from the Approach Control facility having jurisdiction over the departure point. In cases where the departure point is outside of Approach Control airspace, the departure clearance must be obtained from the appropriate ATC facility that has jurisdiction over the departure point.

(4) When approximately twenty (20) NM from the destination, pilots will normally request a cruise clearance to their destination coordinates. The destination coordinates will be the start to either a HEDA or an OSAP. In the event of a missed approach, the pilot will maintain 2,000 feet, or the altitude specified by ATC, and proceed direct to the destination coordinates in their flight plan.

(5) Holding must be accomplished at the destination coordinates until an alternate clearance is received from ZHU. Due to fuel considerations and areas of limited FAA radio coverage in the offshore airspace, operators may request an alternate clearance prior to commencing a descent for the HEDA or OSAP, if a missed approach is probable.

c. Offshore Departures.

(1) Non-ADS-B aircraft must file a full route of flight as outlined in paragraph 5a(3), and paragraph 5a(9), if applicable, which will include a clearance limit waypoint or an inbound waypoint as depicted in ANNEX 1, 2, 3, or 4. ADS-B equipped aircraft must file to the nearest GRID system waypoint on course and then file direct to the clearance limit waypoint or inbound waypoint depicted in ANNEX 1, 2, 3, or 4.

NOTE: *Aircraft that will depart more than twenty (20) NM into ZJX will be required to file a route of flight as outlined in paragraph 5a(9).*

(2) Companies and/or operators must file flight plans at least thirty (30) minutes prior to departure. The coordinates for the departure point and requested onshore SIAP must be filed. Flight plans must also include the appropriate clearance limit and/or SIAP transition fix depicted on the approach plate for that particular approach. All clearance limits and SIAP transition fixes are depicted in ANNEX 1.

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(3) Flight plans must be filed using coordinates for the offshore departure point. If there is a requested onshore SIAP, it must be placed in the remarks section of the flight plan. If the destination is offshore, then the procedures in paragraph 5b(3) will also apply.

(4) Departure clearances must be obtained from the appropriate ATC facility that has jurisdiction for the departure point. Pilots should expect a ten (10) minute Clearance Void Time, unless otherwise requested.

(5) ATC may clear non-ADS-B aircraft to the clearance limits listed in ANNEX 1. ATC will clear ADS-B aircraft to their destination.

6. ATTACHMENTS.

- a. ANNEX 1: Offshore GRID System.
- b. ANNEX 2: Lake Charles (LCH) GRID Waypoint Arrival and Departure Procedures.
- c. ANNEX 3: White Lake (LLA) GRID Waypoint Arrival and Departure Procedures.
- d. ANNEX 4: Tibby (TBD) GRID Waypoint Arrival and Departure Procedures.
- e. ANNEX 5: Offshore Helicopter Holding Pattern Airspace.
- f. ANNEX 6: Offshore Sector Phone Numbers.

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David Mullinax

Digitally signed by David Mullinax
Date: 2018.02.22 06:59:15 -06'00'

David Mullinax
Air Traffic Manager
Houston ARTC Center

(b) (6)

Dustin B. Hendrix
Commander, USN
Commanding Officer, FACSFACJAX
Regional Airspace Coordinator

ROBERT P
MORRIS

Digitally signed by ROBERT P MORRIS
Date: 2018.02.22 08:23:05 -06'00'

Robert P. Morris
Air Traffic Manager
Houston TRACON

JOHN T
HENDRIX JR

Digitally signed by JOHN T HENDRIX JR
Date: 2018.02.27 08:10:51 -06'00'

John Hendrix
Air Traffic Manager
Lake Charles ATCT / TRACON

CHRISTOPHE
R R CLARK

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Date: 2018.02.22 07:21:31 -06'00'

Christopher R. Clark
Air Traffic Manager
Lafayette ATCT / TRACON

JOHN F
BEAUCHAT

Digitally signed by JOHN F BEAUCHAT
Date: 2018.02.22 07:54:41 -06'00'

John F. Beauchat
Air Traffic Manager
New Orleans ATCT / TRACON

MICHAEL D
NALL

Digitally signed by MICHAEL D NALL
Date: 2018.02.27 12:39:50 -06'00'

Michael D. Nall
Air Traffic Manager
Gulfport ATCT / TRACON

CHRISTOPHE
R A WILBANKS

Digitally signed by CHRISTOPHER A WILBANKS
Date: 2018.02.27 10:52:28 -06'00'

Christopher Wilbanks
Air Traffic Manager
Mobile ATCT / TRACON

MICHAEL N
SOTO

Digitally signed by MICHAEL N SOTO
Date: 2018.02.27 15:26:08 -06'00'

Michael N. Soto
Air Traffic Manager
Corpus Christi ATCT / TRACON

CHARLES O
PETERS

Digitally signed by CHARLES O PETERS
Date: 2018.02.22 07:28:56 -06'00'

Charles O. Peters
Manager
Jackson FSDO

JAY C
WILKINS

Digitally signed by JAY C WILKINS
Date: 2018.02.27 15:39:12 -06'00'

Jay C. Wilkins
Manager
Houston FSDO

WILLIAM A
SMITH JR

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William A. Smith
Manager
Baton Rouge FSDO

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(b) (6)
Steve Rayburn
Director of Operations
All American Aviation Services, LLC

Russell Kaskel
Digitally signed by Russell Kaskel
DN: cn=Russell Kaskel, o=Era Helicopters, LLC, ou=Operations, email=rkaskel@erahelicopters.com, c=US
Date: 2018.02.22 08:23:25 -06'00'
Russell Kaskel
Director of Operations
Era Helicopters, LLC

(b) (6)
Robert Q Old Jr.
2018.02.28 09:25:35
-06'00'
Bob Old
Pilot Operations
Bristow US, LLC

rsqy, Richard Sloan
Digitally signed by rsqy, Richard Sloan
DN: ou=Chevron PKI, cn=rsqy, cn=Richard Sloan, email=RSQY@chevron.com
Date: 2018.02.22 08:37:02 -06'00'
Rick Sloan
Director of Operations
Chevron

Robert M. McCoy
Digitally signed by Robert M. McCoy
Date: 2018.02.22 08:30:10 -06'00'
Robert M. McCoy
Director of Operations
Westwind Helicopters, Inc.

Digitally signed by gregory g goldsmith
Date: 2018.02.22 09:52:12 -06'00'
Adobe Acrobat DC version: 2015.006.30413
Greg Goldsmith
Chief Pilot
PHI, Inc.

(b) (6)
Brian Laverenz
Aviation Manager - Helicopter
Noble Drilling Services, Inc.

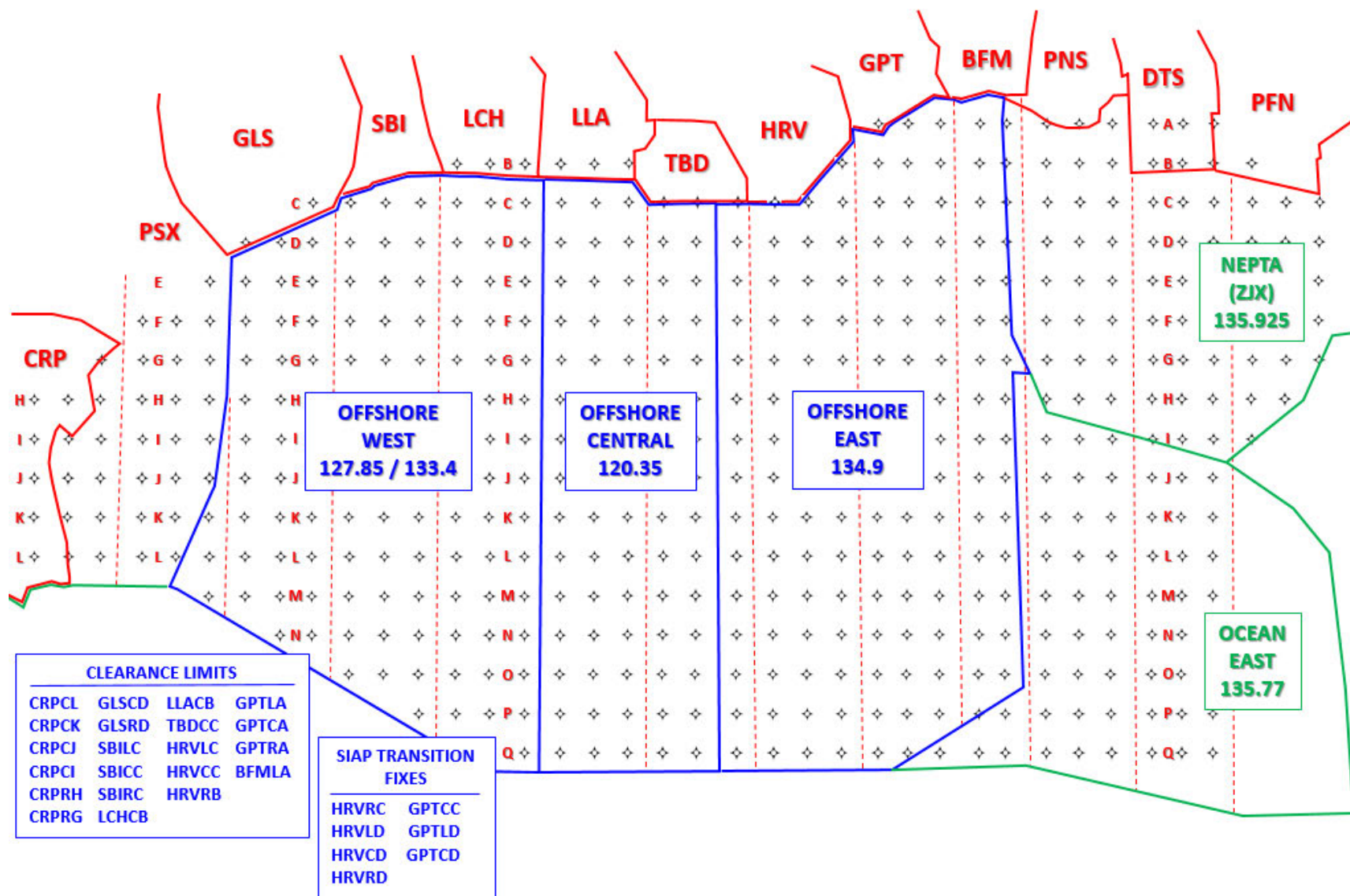
James M Arthur
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James Arthur
Director of Operations
Metro Aviation, Inc.

John McCullough
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Date: 2018.02.22 11:55:14 -06'00'
John McCullough
Director of Operations
Republic Helicopters, Inc.

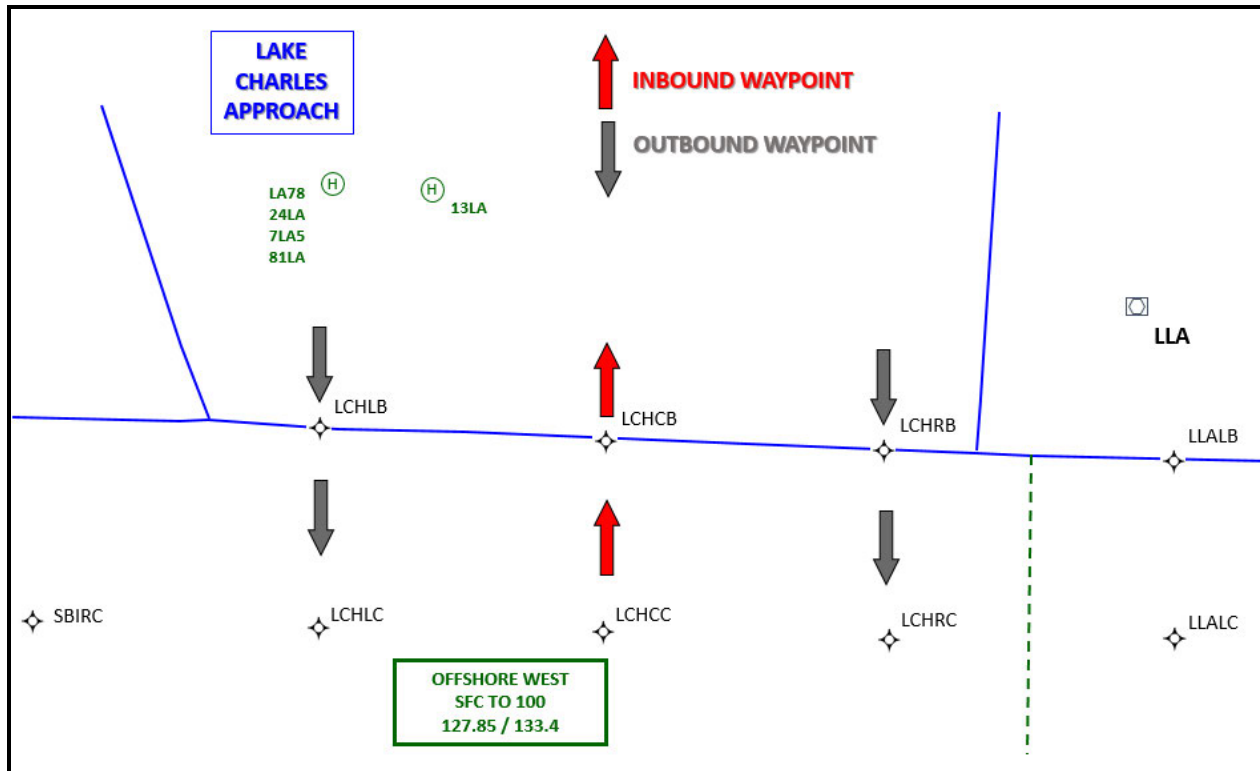
Pat Graves
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Patrick Graves
Director of Operations
Rotorcraft Leasing Co., LLC

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ANNEX 1
OFFSHORE GRID SYSTEM



ANNEX 2
LAKE CHARLES (LCH) GRID WAYPOINT
ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES



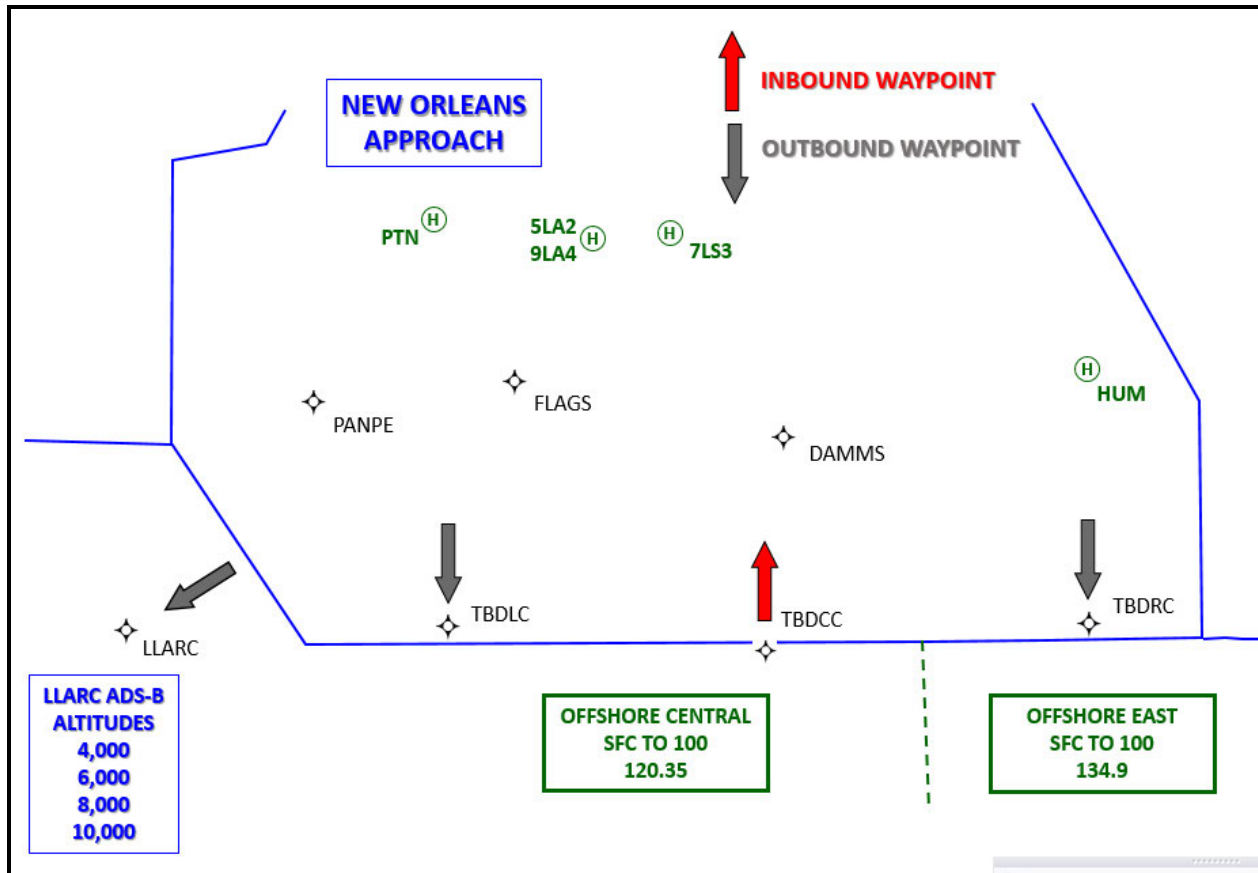
NOTE: Non-ADS-B aircraft must file inbound and outbound over the “Charlie” row, as depicted above.

The diagram illustrates the Lafayette Approach, a series of waypoints and altitudes for aircraft. Key elements include:

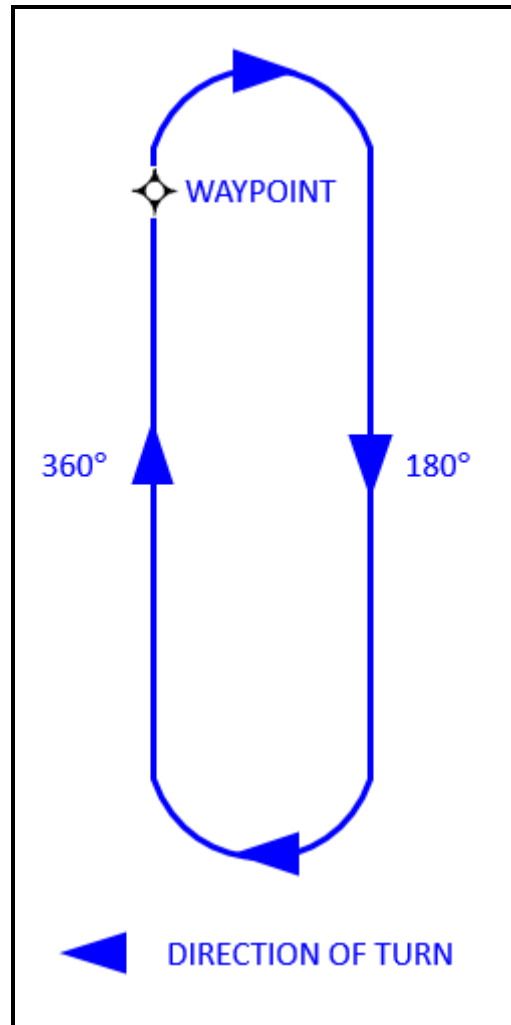
- Waypoints:** LCHRB, LCHRC, LLA, LLALB, LLALC, BLATZ, LLACB, LLACC, LLARB, and LLARC.
- Altitudes:**
 - OFFSHORE WEST:** SFC TO 100, 127.85 / 133.4
 - OFFSHORE CENTRAL:** SFC TO 100, 120.35
 - LLARC ADS-B ALTITUDES:** 5,000, 7,000, 9,000
- Flight Paths:** Indicated by arrows showing inbound and outbound directions.
- LA09 1LA9 7LS4:** A specific flight path or altitude restriction.

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ANNEX 4
TIBBY (TBD) GRID WAYPOINT
ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES



ANNEX 5
OFFSHORE HELICOPTER HOLDING PATTERN AIRSPACE



NOTE: The standard holding pattern depicted is for use 10,000 feet and below. It is applicable for each Gulf of Mexico GRID waypoint. Maximum holding airspeed is 100 knots to ensure aircraft will remain within ATC protected airspace.

ANNEX 6
OFFSHORE SECTOR PHONE NUMBERS

